

Statement of the Honorable Blanche L. Lincoln, Chairman

Lincoln Delivers Disaster Assistance to Agricultural Producers

September 15, 2010

Little Rock-- U.S. Senator Blanche Lincoln, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, made the following statement in response to the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) announcement of the 2009 Disaster Assistance program. Lincoln introduced agricultural disaster relief legislation in November 2009 and has since been working in Congress and with the Administration to deliver the assistance.

"As Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I am proud to fight for farmers in Arkansas and across the country during these tough economic times, and deliver assistance that will save jobs and protect our nation's safe, affordable and abundant supply of food and fiber.

"This relief is long-overdue, and I have made certain that producers who are eligible will receive this assistance in the coming weeks—not months or years as is too often the case.

"Securing this assistance has not been an easy battle, but one that I am proud to have fought. As usual, American farm families have a target on their backs in Washington, D.C., because very few people understand production agriculture. On five separate occasions, Republicans blocked passage of my disaster assistance legislation, choosing to play politics with the livelihoods of American farmers while ignoring the fact that my legislation would not add one penny to the national debt. In addition, I am disappointed the Administration did not develop a program that was closer to my original legislation which provided adequate assistance to all crops, from all regions of the country.

"Despite these hurdles, I was able to use my influence as Chairman to provide relief to farm families. In Arkansas, this program will ensure nearly 90% of all acres are eligible to receive assistance if they experienced a weather-related disaster. It will also help hundreds of poultry growers and fish farmers who are suffering due to circumstances beyond their control.

"My responsibility as Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee is to fight for hard-working farm families across the country who feed millions of Americans and those around the world. It has become clear that the permanent disaster program (the Supplemental Revenue Assistance program) works well for farmers in other regions, but fails the vast majority of producers in the South. Until we have a permanent disaster program that works for everyone, we must provide our farmers and ranchers with the support they need and deserve."